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# International Trade Secretariats Les Secrétariats Internationaux de Syndicats de Travailleurs

Leon A. Dale

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### Résumé de l'article

#### RÉVOLUTION INDUSTRIELLE ET TRAVAIL

Vers la mi-dix-neuvième siècle, le caractère international de la révolution industrielle était évident. C'est à cette époque que Marx publia son Manifeste du Communisme considérant les syndicats ou les organisations de travailleurs comme un véhicule économique vers la puissance politique. Soutenant que les travailleurs étaient exploités par les propriétaires des biens de production, Marx appuya la destruction de la « classe capitaliste » par la classe ouvrière et l'établissement d'une société sans classe au moyen de la dictature du prolétariat et du communisme.

C'est à Londres qu'un certain nombre de réfugiés se réunirent autour de Marx pour former en 1864 la première Internationale alors appelée l'Association internationale des Travailleurs, organisation à caractère politique. Plusieurs conclurent qu'une telle organisation était mal équipée pour administrer leurs besoins économiques. On décida alors d'établir la deuxième Internationale dont la principale préoccupation était l'unification de la classe des travailleurs.

#### LA FORMATION DES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX DE SYNDICATS DE TRAVAILLEURS

De 1860 à 1901, on note, au plan international, la formation d'organisations de travailleurs, chacune dans une industrie particulière, pour répondre aux problèmes posés par l'internationalisation du commerce. Le fait que ce dernier soit devenu international, et par conséquent la grande pression pour les syndicats de le devenir aussi, amena l'idée des organisations internationales de syndicats de travailleurs.

Les SIST essayaient de réaliser au niveau international ce que leurs filiales effectuaient au plan national. Originellement, les SIST étaient basés sur les métiers individuels mais graduellement ils furent remplacés par un nouveau type de SIST industriels composés de groupes hétérogènes de travailleurs qui n'étaient pas réellement de même métier. Les SIST sont ordinairement composés de confédérations ou syndicats nationaux groupant des travailleurs d'un métier ou d'une industrie au niveau national. Mais les secrétariats pouvaient avoir plusieurs filiales dans le même pays. Il est intéressant de noter que l'individu comme tel n'est pas membre des SIST. Il doit d'abord appartenir à un syndicat, ordinairement local, qui lui est membre d'une confédération : c'est cette dernière qui est affiliée aux SIST.

Les buts des secrétariats sont de promouvoir les intérêts des travailleurs dans leur industrie respective, d'encourager les organisations de travailleurs dans les différents pays et de fournir une aide en temps de trouble.

#### LES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX DES SYNDICATS DE TRAVAILLEURS ET L'ENTRE-DEUX-GUERRES

On note, vers la fin de la 1ère grande guerre, deux développements décisifs qui affectèrent le mouvement international du travail : le premier fut l'établissement du régime soviétique en Russie et la formation par les soviets, en 1919, d'une Internationale rouge du travail dont la mission était d'amener tous les mouvements syndicaux sous le contrôle russe. Le second fut le remplacement pour quelques mouvements syndicaux nationaux européens de leur approche socialiste doctrinaire des problèmes ouvriers par une approche plus pragmatique doublée d'une perspective nationale des affaires internationales.

Durant cette période, l'avènement du fascisme, en plus du communisme, et la plus terrible crise économique empêchèrent les syndicats nationaux de fonctionner effectivement. À l'image déjà complexe du travail international vint s'ajouter, en 1920, la Confédération internationale des Syndicats Chrétiens. La C.I.S.C. fut fondée partiellement en réponse au communisme et aux versions anti-religieuses.

L'après-guerre fut une période très active en ce qui a trait à la formation d'organisation nationale et internationale du travail. LES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX AUJOURD'HUI

Durant la guerre, on établit, en 1941, le Comité du Syndicalisme Anglo-Soviet suivi de la fondation du Conseil du Syndicalisme international d'Urgence. Ce dernier décida qu'il serait la voix du travail international et formula un plan pour la reconstruction du mouvement syndical international après la guerre. Finalement, en septembre 1945, on note l'établissement de la Confédération mondiale des syndicats ouvriers (CMSO) qui amènera en 1945 les SIST à créer un comité consultatif qui négocierait collectivement avec la CMSO.

L'unité syndicale avec la participation russe était un mythe et bientôt il devint évident que la CMSO était contrôlée par les communistes. Vers 1948, les SIST refusèrent de se joindre à une CMSO divisée.

De 1948 à 1951, l'idée de s'associer à un autre corps international, amena les SIST à créer plusieurs comités de liaison ou autres dont la fonction était de coopérer, surtout avec la CMSO. Mais le refus constant des SIST à se joindre à la CMSO amena cette dernière à former les Internationales Syndicales qui étaient en concurrence directe avec les SIST.

Avec la formation en 1919 de l'Organisation internationale du travail, dont l'un des buts était l'établissement d'un code du travail international, il devint très important pour les SIST de se faire entendre et d'assurer une représentation constante. Avec la formation, après la guerre, de l'Unesco, on demanda une plus grande représentation et de plus complètes informations pour que la participation soit meilleure.

Géographiquement, l'établissement de bureaux à l'extérieur de l'Europe représente un développement important pour les SIST qui avaient eu, depuis des décades, de grandes difficultés à sortir du vieux continent.

# International Trade Secretariats

Leon A. Dale

*In this article, the author explains the formation and development of International Trade Secretariats (ITS). There was strong pressure to merge international labor organizations into ITS encompassing an industry. Moreover, ITS originally based on individual crafts or trades were gradually replaced by a new type of «industrial» ITS composed of sometimes heterogenous groups of workers.*

## The Industrial Revolution and Labor

The disruption of medieval patterns of economic systems of production brought on by the Industrial Revolution was felt in varying degrees of intensity by the various national economies of Europe. The establishment of the new factory system with its impersonal relationship breaking up the old family and guild patterns of production, large-scale exploitation of workers still unprotected by trade unions, misery, unemployment and poverty led many social scientists to study more closely the production pattern.

« The first union on the road to an international organization of workers of all countries which gave itself the objective of transforming the existing political and social order was the « Federation of Communists » founded in London in 1838, in which however the labor circles were of less importance than the participants from the educated classes. » <sup>1</sup>

By 1848, the international character of the Industrial Revolution was apparent and revolutions were taking place in key European countries. Ideas were beginning to be freely exchanged as workers, particularly skilled workers, such as printers, were going from one country to another. Some writers had advocated the adjustment of the new society to the individual rather than vice-versa. Karl Marx, who with Engels, wrote « The Communist Manifesto » which appeared in 1848, took a different view. The Communist Manifesto was the first clear statement of Marxism and the first one considering trade unions or workers' organizations as the economic vehicle to political power. The man support of labor was deemed indispensable for the revolutionary communist seizure of power. Claiming that workers were exploited systematically by factory owners or owners of the means of pro-

DALE, LEON A., Chairman, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

(1) KULEMANN, p. 201.

duction, Marx advocated the overthrow of the « capitalist class » by the « working class » and the establishment of a classless society via the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism.

In London, a number of refugees banded together around Marx and a few prominent anarchists and with trade union support founded the 1st International in 1864, called then the International Workingmen's Association <sup>2</sup>. It was in effect the first labor international even though

a political organization. It was chiefly concerned with the formulation of principles designed to guide the working classes in their social and political struggles, particularly with regard to the role of trade unions, cooperatives, nationalization of key industries and land, workers' role in elections and the role of the State. From the beginning, British trade unions played a very important role in the 1st International, but the latter's political action led to internal dissensions and its eventual demise. The 1st International, it should be noted was formed from the top down rather than vice-versa ; this was also a cause for its demise.

The developing process of industrialization called for an increasing degree of literacy on the part of those involved in it. There was therefore a demand for education, for universal education, which itself resulted in the raising of many questions regarding the new economic processes and their political and social background. Industrial organization with its intensification of production led to further economic pressures such as downward pressure on wages. The very fact that industrialization was accompanied by economic crises which to some economists appeared as inevitable as the life cycle itself, added a new factor, or at least emphasized a new factor in economic life, that of insecurity. Greater literacy then was accompanied by greater insecurity. Feverish searches for a remedy for the latter were undertaken by a number of socialists who Karl Marx called « Utopian » since their proposals did not have a « scientific » basis, i.e., were not Marxist. Meanwhile, in self-defense against the strong economic pressures of the day, individual workers began forming organizations in their own trades, and modern trade unionism was under way, on a national basis. It was not until the end of the 19th century that true international trade unionism made its appearance for :

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(2) Professor Selig Perlman considers the British trade unionists as having been the sparkplug of the new international :

« The *Internationale* is generally reported to have been organized by Karl Marx for the propagation of international socialism. As a matter of fact, its starting point was the practical effort of British trade union leaders to organize the working men of the continent and to prevent the importation of strike breakers. » SELIG PERLMAN, *The History of Trade Unionism in the United States*, Augustus M. Kelley, Inc., New York, 1950, p. 73.

« The organization of the workers internationally presupposes a certain degree of development of their own national organizations, at least to the extent that practical objects are concerned. » <sup>3</sup>

By the time the 2nd International, (from which the anarchists were excluded), was established in 1889, many workers had come to the conclusion that an international political organization (even though it catered to labor questions) was ill-equipped (particularly in view of the widely different political views held by trade union members) to minister to their immediate economic international needs. In fact, some held that the very political coloration of the International was a handicap. The 2nd International was concerned with the unification of the working class, and the attitude toward the State, capitalism and war :

« ... the International Workingmen's Congresses, International Socialist Labour and Trade Union Congresses, Internationalist Socialist Congresses and other similar gatherings under a variety of names... were all primarily political in spite of the attendance of many trade union delegates and the occasional treatment of trade union questions. » <sup>4</sup>

### The Formation of International Trade Secretariats (ITS)

In the late 1860's, organizations of glove-makers in Germany, Austria, France, Denmark and Sweden began to send representatives to each other's congresses. In 1867, the Amalgamated Engineers of Great Britain had an affiliate in France, eleven in the United States and some in parts of the British Empire. In 1871, a mutual agreement was concluded on trade union questions between the Viennese, German and Scandinavian glove-makers organizations. Tobacco workers, following the same pattern, set up under the auspices of the London Cigar-Makers Association an International Federation of Tobacco Workers which died shortly afterwards. In 1873, the Pottery workers established a Central Organization of Potters with headquarters in German and including members from Austria, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland ; it disappeared when Germany passed the so-called « Socialist Laws ». An International Federation of Glass Workers is reported to have been founded in 1884 with members from Belgium, France and Great Britain although another report claims such an organization was founded at the first international congress of glass workers in London in 1886, but :

« Only with the development of the International Socialist and Labor Congresses, that is, since 1889, did the international union movement begin to take more solid shape. It was exactly these Congresses, offering the opportunity for representatives of various trades to come together, which made a substantial contribution toward tightening the relations between trade unions of individual countries. Therefore, it is really from the period following 1889 that the real development of international trade union organizations is to be dated. » <sup>5</sup>

(3) J. SASSENBACK, *Twenty-Five Years of International Trade Unionism*, International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, 1926, p. 3.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

(5) KULEMANN, p. 235.

Also in 1889 other International Trade Secretariats (ITS) were reported formed or re-established, the hatters, the shoemakers and the cigar-makers, (later tobacco workers). In 1901, in Copenhagen, the International Secretariat of National Centers of Trade Unions was established, forerunner of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The International Secretariat of National Centers of Trade Unions, had been sponsored by French and British trade union leaders as a move against socialist domination of the 2nd International. Examination of mutual problems was the main concern of the new labor international as well as the reconciliation of widely different types of unionism as represented by German financially strong unions and French revolutionary syndicalism. The new labor organization also faced the rivalry of the 2nd International which had not given up its interest in labour and was strongly supported by the German trade union movement. In some countries, trade unions were forbidden by law, or by their governments, to join in International organizations; such was the case for Austria. But these unions remained free to join an International Information Bureau. The International Secretariat of National Centers of Trade Unions and also most International Trade Secretariats were little more than information bureaus at the time.

The relationship of the ITS to the whole trade union movement, both nationally and internationally, was not strong enough to benefit either trade unionism or socialism. For that reason, when the question of setting up an International of Printers, (particularly literate group), was discussed, predominance of either economic or political forces was not achieved.

« In the first place, there was a question of principle on the relation to socialism; . . . many who were sympathetic to the idea (of founding a Federation of Printers) were reluctant because they were shy about being associated with any political group and presented the view that it was necessary for all forces of the proletariat to be confined for the time being to this economic domain; . . .

The last question revolved on the position of trade unions to politics. While some of the participants recommended concern with economic, social and political questions others considered the dragging in of Politics into trade unions as damaging. They were unable to agree upon either principle, and so all the proposals in this connection were rejected. »<sup>6</sup>

During that period, a number of other ITS were formed, each grouping workers in a particular industry, e.g., mines, metals, etc., in answer to the problems posed by the internationalization of trade (cartels, monopolies, intensification of competition in some sectors with resulting decreases in wages, etc.). Workers had thus a definite interest in conditions affecting workers in the same trade or industry in other countries as the goods they were producing were moving across national

(6) KULEMANN, W., *Die Berufsvereine*, 1913, p. 236-239.

boundaries in ever increasing quantities. Workers' solidarity began to make itself felt along industrial lines and across nation borders. Trade had become international and so there was strong pressure for trade unions to become international, that is to form international organizations. Economic insecurity had also become international in character. Weaknesses of individual workers' organizations could no longer be successfully overcome along purely national lines; the local and national organizations of workers had to assume an international character. While the abstract notion of workers' solidarity provided by socialist theories as well as the class struggle concept was still strong among labor, it was beginning to be overshadowed by very real economic problems which called for a practical solidarity rooted solidly in the job. In other words, a national job solidarity was becoming international while the socialist concepts which did not provide the basis of the new solidarity were relegated to the background.<sup>7</sup> One of the ways in which this solidarity expressed itself was through the formation of ITS which were trying to do on the international level what their affiliates (federations) were doing on the national level.

But the Socialist concepts while fading out of the picture were not wholly absent :

« Some of the International Trade Secretariats take a longer view of their aims and objects... There are some that plainly declare themselves in favour of workers' control, socialization, or similar changes in the ownership and organization of the industries in which they are interested. »<sup>8</sup>

It was soon discovered that the ITS which numbered approximately 26 between 1900 and 1914 could not function effectively if they tried to cover only a small part of a particular trade or industry :

« By 1927, 26 ITS's operated normally. Some of them, however, met with increasing difficulties due to the fact that their memberships were small, and were bound to remain small, whilst their tasks and the scope of their activities grew as much as those of the more powerful ITS's. It was therefore quite natural that the responsible people in these movements were looking for satisfactory methods to overcome these difficulties. Obviously, the method of amalgamation was the one that presented itself first. »<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, too, amalgamation presented difficulties too in terms of personality conflicts, the selection of leaders of the newly merged organizations as well as administrative problems. Nonetheless, ITS in related trades were from the beginning under steady pressure to merge and form larger organizations. Costs of international congresses and

(7) A concrete example is the present International Solidarity Fund of the ICFTU.

(8) *Ibid.*

(9) WALTER SCHEVENELS, *A Historical Precis, Forty-Five Years, 1901-1945*, IFTU, published by the Board of Trustees of the International Federation of Trade Unions, Brussels, 1957.

travel, need for competent staff and adequate offices, publications of news bulletins in several languages, coordination of action, exchange of information, provision for interpreters and translators, representation at meetings of other international bodies and hosts of other problems (not to mention the language barrier) were proving too much for international associations of workers based on individual trades or skills, i.e., based on affiliates with a relatively small following. Hence, there was strong pressure to merge international labor organizations into ITS encompassing an industry. ITS originally based on individual crafts or trades were gradually replaced by a new type of « industrial » ITS composed of sometimes heterogeneous groups of workers not really linked by the usual trade bonds.

International Trade Secretariats are usually made up of federations or national unions which group together workers of one trade or industry, on the national level. For example, in the United States, the National Agricultural Workers' Union belongs to the ITS of agricultural workers which is known as the International Landworkers' Federation (ILF). This American union, even though small, caters to all agricultural workers in the United States and is a member of the AFL-CIO (itself a member of the ICFTU). Therefore, although indirectly it is represented in international circles, direct voice in international labor is secured by its affiliation with the ILF. In some cases, the ITS had several affiliates from the same country. This occurs when the ITS is composed of federations of unions in allied industries; for example, the International Union of Food and Drink Workers' Associations includes butchers, brewers and bakers; for that reason, it has several American affiliates. The affiliates pay dues to the ITS on the basis of the size of their membership and often carry a voice in the conduct of the organization proportional to their membership. All the headquarters of the ITS are located in Europe, with occasionally an office in the Western Hemisphere or in Asia. Running the day-to-day affairs of the ITS is the Secretary General who often hires the employees of the secretariat. He is responsible for issuing a bulletin in several languages and for coordinating the work of the affiliates. He sees to it that committee meetings take place, helps affiliates to conduct congresses, represents the ITS at meetings, such as those of the ILO and other International Labor bodies and generally is pretty much in control of affairs of the organization, (including the financial affairs which are usually checked by committees appointed by the annual, biennial or even triennial congresses). Also at the head of the ITS is the President whose responsibilities are more of an honorary nature. The President represents the ITS at functions and conventions, is called upon to give speeches but by and large does not participate too closely in the day-to-day work.

Helping the Secretary General and the President to run the ITS between congresses, is an executive committee consisting of officials of the most important affiliates of the ITS. Sometimes, there is even

another committee helping to run the organization in addition to the executive committee.

Generally, the ITS do not deal with the national centers to which their affiliates belong. The reason for that is that the national centers belong to the ICFTU. This is not to say that there are absolutely no relations between the two, since labor officials at the higher echelons usually travel a good deal and become sooner or later acquainted with each other at international meetings, but there are no formal relationships, except perhaps when ITS with the ICFTU on special occasions.

It is interesting to note that individuals as such are not ITS members. They first must belong to a union, usually a local union which itself is a member of a federation or national union which in turn is an ITS affiliate. Some ITS, like the International Transportworkers Federation have several million members, others have a few hundred thousands. Some ITS exist practically only on paper which often means that they are ready to be merged with other effectively functioning ITS.

« In general the objects of the International Trade Secretariats are to promote the interests of the workers in the industries in which they are interested, to encourage the organizations in the different countries, and to provide for mutual help in times of trouble. The activities of the International Trade Secretariats in their own fields are, therefore, similar to those of the IFTU in the wider sphere. They attempt to promote the interests of workers in their respective industries both nationally and internationally. They are prepared to assist in the development of trade union organization amongst those workers by giving advice, by providing information and sometimes by rendering financial assistance. Some of them have definite provisions to this effect in their rules. Most of the International Trade Secretariats are willing to give direct assistance to affiliated unions involved in strikes and lock-outs... Another form of activity is the protection of members proceeding from one country to another to take up work. »<sup>10</sup>

### **International Trade Secretariats Between World War I and World War II**

By the end of World War I, two decisive developments occurred which to this day profoundly affected the international labor movement. The first was the establishment of a Soviet regime in Russia and the formation by the Soviet in 1919 of a Red Internationale of Labor Unions (also known as Profintern) whose mission was to bring under Soviet control labor movements everywhere. The second was the shedding by a number of national European trade union movements of their doctrinaire socialist approach to labor problems and replacing it by a more pragmatic approach coupled with a national perspective in international affairs. The theoretical and abstract solidarity of labor had

(10) JOHN PRICE, *The International Labour Movement*, Oxford University Press, London, 1947, p. 59.



proved a failure and the true basis for a common consideration of international labor problems, i.e., job solidarity, had made itself felt.

It is at this time that international labor was facing its most crucial political challenge. The emergence of the USSR as a world power and as an anti-nationalist force at the very time that labor movements were becoming nationalistic was causing splits and troubles in almost all of the labor movement and socialist parties. The historic schism between Socialism and Communism which took place then is one of the major political developments of the 20th century. During this period, the rise of Fascism in addition to that of Communism, and the worst economic depression the world had known were making it difficult for national trade union movements to function effectively. In most European countries, not only labor movements were split but communist parties were formed which sought to gain control over the still free organizations. Furthermore, individual Soviet federations sought membership in various ITS and sometime secured it usually bringing havoc to the organization concerned and disruption to its proceedings.

To the already complex labor picture, a new element was added when in 1920 the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) was formed. At that time, the IFCTU was based on a few European Christian trade union such as that of France, and to this day the IFCTU, with but a few exceptions, has not assumed global importance. Its very existence, however, has been a factor in the further splitting of Catholic elements away from national centers in some cases.<sup>11</sup>

The IFCTU was founded partly as an answer to communism and anti-religious versions of socialism, the former already posing a threat of a world-wide nature. The anti-religious character of much of the membership of the IFTU precluded it from cooperating with the IFCTU. In fact, the eventual sponsoring by the IFCTU of the formation of Christian trade unions in a number of countries in direct competition with the affiliates of the IFTU led to strained relations between the two, even though there were contacts and discussions at ILO meetings. To this day, the situation has not significantly changed although from time to time moves are made to merge the ICFTU and the IFCTU or at least have them cooperate. The IFCTU has 5 international trade secretariats, which, like those of the WFTU, are part of the central structure. They have not been very active and not much is known about them. Within the IFCTU, which is mostly a Catholic organization, there appears to be a section known as the Protestant International with a very small following.

The post World War I period was a very active one in terms of the formation of national and international labor organizations. Even

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(11) Before and after World War I, the open hostility to religion in many unions and union meetings resulted in alienating Catholic workers.

the anarchists established their own International claiming to adhere to at least some of the principles which had governed the 1st International and taking its name, the International Working Men's Association which was founded in Berlin in 1921.

Shortly thereafter, the British trade unions were urging the IFTU to accept the affiliation of the All-Soviet Council of Trade Unions (ASCTU) and established in 1925 a joint Anglo-Soviet Advisory Committee for closer cooperation between the labor movements of the two countries. By the following year, Soviet attacks on the British trade unions brought the work of the committee to an end and the ASCTU was never admitted to the IFTU.

Not only on the labor front, but everywhere labor was on the defensive; on the political and international front it was under strong attack; internally, it was divided. On the political scene World War I had caused the demise of the 2nd International, and after the war, an International Working Union of Socialist Parties (known also as the 2 and ½ International) proved unworkable and was followed by a labor and Socialist International (LSI). There was close cooperation on actions and motions against fascism and war between the IFTU and the LSI. Again, World War II brought the activities of both the IFTU and the LSI to a stop. The RILU had been dissolved around 1935, but the 3rd International (also known as the Comintern) founded in 1919 by the Soviet government continued its existence until 1943 when it was disbanded by Stalin as a good-will gesture toward the Allies.

Before World War I and between the two world wars, a large number of ITS had their headquarters in Germany whose trade unions had a strong socialist tradition and a definite interest in international labor. The advent of Nazism and the subsequent crushing of German trade unionism caused a severe loss in membership to the international labor movement as well as a relocation of headquarters of several ITS.

### **The International Trade Secretariats Today**

During the war, an Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee was set up in 1941, and the following year an Emergency International Trade Union Council was established with representation from the IFTU, national trade union centers and trade union groups in exile. The Council decided it would be the voice of international labor and formulated a plan for the reconstruction of the international trade union movement at the termination of the war. Other labor committees sprang up: in 1942, an Anglo-American Trade Union Committee was formed (as the AFL had refused to participate in the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee) and by the end of 1943, the British trade unions sent out invitations to a World Labor Conference to take place in 1944. In 1944, a Franco-British Trade Union Committee was established and a Franco-Soviet Trade Union Committee in 1945. In February 1945, the British Trades Union Congress invited trade unions throughout the world to an

international meeting in London in which representatives of the IFTU and ITS took part. The AFL refused to take part in the projected conference because of Soviet participation. Representatives of ITS were members of a committee appointed to write the statutes of the new world labor federation. Already, there was a great deal of discussion as to whether the existing ITS should or should not be integrated within the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) which was set up in September 1945 (without AFL but with CIO participation). The establishment of a world labor organization had become a reality, as the IFTU, with its heavy history of anti-Sovietism, was dissolved; besides, the LSI was dead and the Comintern was not resurrected. All of these developments were presumably favorable to the WFTU.

The British Trades Union Congress made its membership in the WFTU dependent on 1) an agreement between the ITS and the WFTU and 2) exclusion of political influences from the WFTU.

In 1946, a conference of ITS was called in Bournemouth, England. While not all of the ITS were represented, the most important were and it was decided to set up a consultative Committee which would negotiate collectively with the WFTU. Meanwhile, some ITS made preparations to become incorporated with the WFTU by accepting merger with the WFTU at their congresses and also calling for the merger of several ITS prior to this incorporation. But the results of the negotiations between the ITS and the WFTU as to the degree of autonomy which the ITS would enjoy were not satisfactory to the WFTU Executive Committee which in 1946 in Moscow called for further negotiations between the ITS and the WFTU. The trouble that:

« Opinions differed greatly. A few of the ITS suggested in a round-about way to leave the international trade departments entirely outside the WFTU ; some others desired only a loose connection (these two groups were influenced by their intention to accept member-organizations of the AFL, which categorically refused any collaboration with the WFTU) ; and a further group of the ITS was in favor of close ties but wished to see maintained a strictly defined sphere of independence. None of the ITS was for unconditional incorporation. On the other hand, the representatives of the WFTU pointed out that ITS were to be created within the framework of the WFTU in order to enable workers in the USA, the USSR, South Africa, etc., who were not members of the ITS, to organize themselves (according to their trade or industry) on an international scale, and to have their interests safeguarded. *The representatives of the Soviet Trade Unions wished to lay the main emphasis on the organs of the WFTU, and desired that the function of the ITS be to render maximum benefit to the WFTU, by their activities. The ITS were to act first and foremost in an advisory capacity to the WFTU* ». IUL (IUFD), Negotiations With the WFTU, Report of the Abortive Negotiations With the World Federation of Trade Unions, International Union of Federations of the Workers in the Food and Drink Trade, Zurich, August 1949, p. 17. Underlined by the author.

Trade union unity with Soviet participation was a myth and soon it

became evident that the WFTU was communist-controlled.<sup>12</sup> In 1948, a number of national trade union centers participated in a European Recovery Program Trade Union Conference in support of the Marshall Plan which the secretariat of the WFTU had attacked. The year before, the Soviets had set up the Cominform as a successor of the Comintern. Soviet foreign policy, itself a projection of Soviet domestic policy, was changing from cooperation to revolution and the WFTU was charged with carrying out this policy in the international labor movement. By 1948, it was clear that incorporation of the ITS into an increasingly split WFTU was out of the question. That year, representatives of 14 ITS in a statement to the WFTU Executive Committee said:

« We declare that in the circumstances and in view of the developments in the World Federation of Trade Unions during the past two years the interests of the International Trade Secretariats can best be served by continuing their independence until such time as negotiations can be resumed with a Trade Union International that may bring the Trade Secretariats together on a basis of autonomy acceptable to the Trade Secretariats. » IUL, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

There was a hint here of the discussions being held concerning the formation of a new International the International Confederation of Free Unions (ICFTU). In a final statement, the representatives of the Soviet trade unions blaming the ITS for «not answering the interests of the workers of the world and the cause of international trade union unity» requested:

«...the Executive Bureau of the WFTU, when considering the results of negotiations with the ITS, to take all measures in order to strengthen further the ranks of the WFTU, and to create Trade Departments in the very near future », IUL, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

In effect, this was an announcement of a contemplated formation of Trade Union International (TUI's) also known as Trade Departments, the first of which was set up in 1949.

The failure of ITS negotiations with the WFTU led to the disbanding of the Consultative Committee; such a Committee was not new in the history of the ITS neither was the idea of incorporating the ITS into another world labor body. Already in the nineteen twenties, the question had come up as to whether the IFTU should be based on ITS or on national trade union centers. Even then, the ITS had refused to become part of the IFTU and had claimed a right to their own independent status. In 1925, the Executive Committee of the IFTU established a joint *ad hoc* joint IFTU-ITS committee to draft regulations governing IFTU-ITS relations. Nothing came of it. A Coordination Committee was eventually set up to coordinate the work of the IFTU

(12) The Soviet affiliate claimed 40 million members and on basis alone swung a majority of votes within the WFTU. In addition, the French and Italian affiliates voted with the USSR and the Secretariat of the WFTU was communist.

and the ITS against Fascism but dissolved in 1936. As a sequence to the European recovery Program Trade Union Conference, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) had been set up in London in 1949 with the participation of both the AFL and the CIO, the latter having found it impossible to remain within the WFTU. By this time, the « cold war » which had begun in 1946 and became intensified with the success of the Marshall Plan in the rebuilding of the shattered economics of Europe was fully on. In 1951, under British sponsorship, the Socialist International which had been preceded by several socialist conferences and committees was established with a definitely anti-Communist spirit. While this organization is primarily European, it has ties with an Asian Socialist Conference which caters to Asian socialist parties.

Even though the negotiations of the Consultative Committee had ended in failure, it had caused the ITS to cooperate more closely and in 1948 they found it easy to establish the liaison Committee to represent them collectively and to determine the relationship of the ITS to the ICFTU. It was replaced in 1949 by a Coordinating Committee whose task was to coordinate the activities of the ICFTU and the ITS. The activities of this committee were separate from the ICFTU. Again in 1951 this committee was replaced by a Liaison Committee consisting of representatives from the ICFTU, including the latter's Secretary General, and those from the ITS. This committee is financially supported by the various ITS. The various names given these committees constitute a partial indication of the difficulties involved in ITS cooperation with each other and with the world central labor body. While, presently, there exists no real difficulties between the ITS and the ICFTU, nonetheless from time to time questions come up regarding the area of jurisdiction and agreement between the ITS and the ICFTU and at times even the existence and effectiveness of the committee are questioned.

The refusal of the ITS to join the WFTU had caused the latter to form Trade Union Internationals (TUI's) which are in direct competition with the ITS. The centralization of the TUI's within the WFTU and the obligation they have to follow the Communist line has to some extent rendered them ineffective; the membership they have been able to attract in the free world has been small. It might be mentioned that the WFTU has a number of regional offices and organizations, the best known being CTAL (Confederacion de Trabajadores de America Latina) in Mexico. The ICFTU also has regional organizations and offices, one of its most active being ORIT (Organisation Regional Inter-Americana de Trabajadores) in Mexico with which the ITS are cooperating actively.

In that context, the ICFTU plays the role of a United Nations of the free labor movement, but one which has a Soviet counterpart, i.e., the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Also in that context, and continuing the action of the IFTU, the ICFTU is interested in reducing the number of ITS, adding its own pressure to cause and encourage the mergers of ITS whose present jurisdiction either complements or supplements that of others. One reason for this is that it is easier

and more effective for the ICFTU to deal with a small number of ITS, another of course is that it is better to have few and effective ITS than many ineffective ones. Quality is emphasized rather than quantity.<sup>13</sup>

With the formation in 1919 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), one of whose purposes was the establishment of an international labor code, it became very important for the ITS to make their voices felt and secure representation. Each of the ITS readily understood the importance of social legislation cutting across national frontiers, social legislation which to some extent would support their action. This interest in international social legislation was a development foreign to socialism and Marxism; it became difficult if not impossible to reconcile the revolutionary concepts of socialism based on the class struggle and revolution when one sat down side by side with the employer at ILO meetings. Furthermore, to present adequately its point of view, ITS had to be competently represented by internationally minded trade unionists supported by a competent office staff. We thus have an additional reason why ITS in the same industry were and are under strong pressure to unite and merge. Since the ILO was formed, and as a post-World War II development, a number of specialized agencies of the United Nations have made their appearance, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), there has been a demand for more representation work as well as a more intense exchange of information between the ITS and these international bodies. All this has added significantly to the general work load of the ITS. Nationalism and an emphasis on economics have replaced to a great extent socialism and the class struggle. To be sure, lip service was (and sometimes still is) paid to the class struggle concept (even to the end of World War II)<sup>14</sup>, but by and large, the international free labor movement seems to have become more practical. An additional factor, of course, has been the increasingly important role played by traditionally pragmatic American labor in international affairs.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) had joined the International Centers of Trade Unions at the beginning of the century and was even opposed in that organization at times by the International Workers of the World (IWW), an American labor organization strongly influenced by anarcho-syndicalism and of which William Z. Foster was the representative. Samuel Gompers, founder and head of the AFL played a leading role in the establishment of the International Labor Organization (ILO)<sup>15</sup>. From the beginning, the AFL fought socialist influence in the

(13) For example, the acceptance for membership by two ITS of Yugoslav affiliates, reportedly against ICFTU policy.

(14) 1946 seems to be the last year that the song « The Internationale » was sung at the end of an international labor meeting.

(15) Gompers who had wanted an equal representation of Labor, management and government in the ILO was defeated by the socialists, particularly those of Great Britain, who, on the grounds that most governments would soon be socialist, and therefore represent labor, insisted that governments be given two votes to each one for labor and management.

international labor organization from which it withdrew and joined again. Presently, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is a member of the ICFTU and a number of American federations are members of ITS. In view of its large national membership, American labor is called upon to play a very important role internationally.

Geographically, the setting up of offices in non-European parts of the world represents a very important development for many ITS which for decades have found it traditionally difficult to look beyond Europe.

The function of these ITS oftentimes become one of reconciling the widely different points of view which workers coming from different trades and crafts normally hold while it strengthens trade bonds through the establishment of trade groups or sections within the ITS. Thus, these trade groups or sections which sometimes have their own separate financing act as ITS within ITS. These groups enjoy membership in an effective organization giving them adequate support while retaining to some extent their separate identity of a distinctive trade. In fact, while the merger of existing ITS is a continuing process, we now witness a relative decentralization of large ITS taking place on *both* the trade and geographical level. On the trade level, they do so by setting up special departments of workers in the same trades, holding their own conferences, passing resolutions and undertaking their own program of activities.

Interestingly enough, the need for « industrial » ITS is not felt in a similar way at the national level. Affiliates of ITS in each country are under no such pressure to merge (even though other pressures may exist), chiefly because the national centers to which they belong provide in effect solutions to problems immediately outside the trade while encompassing also those of the trade. Some of these include relations with the government, exchange of information, financial support, etc.

From time to time, the question of dual affiliation, i.e., affiliation to the national center and to the ITS, has come up at international labor conferences, a proposal even being put forward that dual affiliation to be made compulsory. Although this proposal was never accepted and would be difficult to put into practice as some federations are composed of several groups of workers and belong consequently to several ITS,<sup>16</sup> it raises by implication the whole question of the relationship of the ITS to be international confederation of national centers, i.e., today the ICFTU, the rightful functions of each, the question of the ICFTU structure, i.e., whether it should be based on national centers or the ITS, and, going one step further the relationship of the ICFTU to the Socialist International.

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(16) Inversely, some ITS have several affiliates from the same country.

## GLOSSARY

AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations
ASCTU	All-Soviet Council of Trade Unions
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CTAL	Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (WFTU)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITS	International Trade Secretariat(s)
IWW	International Workers of the World
LSI	Labor and Socialist International
ORIT	Organization Regional Inter-Americana de Trabajadores (ICFTU)
RILU	Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern)
TUI(s)	Trade Union International(s) (WFTU)
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions

## APPENDIX I

### List of International Trade Secretariats Before World War I

Book Binders	Metalworkers
Brewery Workers	Miners
Building Workers	Painter Workers
Carpenters	Postal Workers
Cigar-makers	Pottery Workers
Diamond Workers	Printing Workers (Typographers)
Factory Workers	Railway Workers
Foundry Workers	Shoemakers
Furriers	Stone Workers (Cutters and Paviers)
Glass Workers	Tailors
Hairdressers	Textile Workers
Hatters	Transport Workers
Hotel and Restaurant Workers	Wood Workers
Lithographers	Workers in Public Service

## APPENDIX II

### List of Present International Trade Secretariats

International Federation of Actors  
 International Federation of Building and Woodworkers  
 International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees  
 Universal Alliance of Diamond Workers  
 International Federation of Entertainment Workers  
 International Union of Food and Drink Workers' Associations  
 International Garment Workers' Federation  
 International Graphical Federation  
 International Union of Hotel, Restaurant and Bar Workers  
 International Federation of Industrial Organizations and General Workers Union  
 International Federation of Journalists  
 International Landworkers' Federation  
 International Metalworkers' Federation  
 Miners' International Federation



International Federation of Musicians  
 International Federation of Petroleum Workers  
 International Plantation Workers Federation  
 Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International  
 International Federation of Unions of Employees in Public and Civil Services  
 International Shoe and Leather Workers' Federation  
 International Federation of Free Teachers' Unions  
 International Federation of Textile Workers' Associations  
 International Federation of Tobacco Workers  
 International Transportworkers' Federation  
 International Federation of Variety Artists

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## LES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX DE SYNDICATS DE TRAVAILLEURS (SIST)

### RÉVOLUTION INDUSTRIELLE ET TRAVAIL

Vers la mi-dix-neuvième siècle, le caractère international de la révolution industrielle était évident. C'est à cette époque que Marx publia son Manifeste du Communisme considérant les syndicats ou les organisations de travailleurs comme un véhicule économique vers la puissance politique. Soutenant que les travailleurs

étaient exploités par les propriétaires des biens de production, Marx appuya la destruction de la « classe capitaliste » par la classe ouvrière et l'établissement d'une société sans classe au moyen de la dictature du prolétariat et du communisme.

C'est à Londres qu'un certain nombre de réfugiés se réunirent autour de Marx pour former en 1864 la première Internationale alors appelée l'Association internationale des Travailleurs, organisation à caractère politique. Plusieurs conclurent qu'une telle organisation était mal équipée pour administrer leurs besoins économiques. On décida alors d'établir la deuxième Internationale dont la principale préoccupation était l'unification de la classe des travailleurs.

#### LA FORMATION DES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX DE SYNDICATS DE TRAVAILLEURS

De 1860 à 1901, on note, au plan international, la formation d'organisations de travailleurs, chacune dans une industrie particulière, pour répondre aux problèmes posés par l'internationalisation du commerce. Le fait que ce dernier soit devenu international, et par conséquent la grande pression pour les syndicats de le devenir aussi, amena l'idée des organisations internationales de syndicats de travailleurs.

Les SIST essayaient de réaliser au niveau international ce que leurs filiales effectuaient au plan national. Originellement, les SIST étaient basés sur les métiers individuels mais graduellement ils furent remplacés par un nouveau type de SIST industriels composés de groupes hétérogènes de travailleurs qui n'étaient pas réellement de même métier. Les SIST sont ordinairement composés de confédérations ou syndicats nationaux groupant des travailleurs d'un métier ou d'une industrie au niveau national. Mais les secrétariats pouvaient avoir plusieurs filiales dans le même pays. Il est intéressant de noter que l'individu comme tel n'est pas membre des SIST. Il doit d'abord appartenir à un syndicat, ordinairement local, qui lui est membre d'une confédération : c'est cette dernière qui est affiliée aux SIST.

Les buts des secrétariats sont de promouvoir les intérêts des travailleurs dans leur industrie respective, d'encourager les organisations de travailleurs dans les différents pays et de fournir une aide en temps de trouble.

#### LES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX DES SYNDICATS DE TRAVAILLEURS ET L'ENTRE-DEUX-GUERRES

On note, vers la fin de la 1ère grande guerre, deux développements décisifs qui affectèrent le mouvement international du travail : le premier fut l'établissement du régime soviétique en Russie et la formation par les soviets, en 1919, d'une Internationale rouge du travail dont la mission était d'amener tous les mouvements syndicaux sous le contrôle russe. Le second fut le remplacement pour quelques mouvements syndicaux nationaux européens de leur approche socialiste doctrinaire des problèmes ouvriers par une approche plus pragmatique doublée d'une perspective nationale des affaires internationales.

Durant cette période, l'avènement du fascisme, en plus du communisme, et la plus terrible crise économique empêchèrent les syndicats nationaux de fonctionner

effectivement. A l'image déjà complexe du travail international vint s'ajouter, en 1920, la Confédération Internationale des Syndicats Chrétiens. La C.I.S.C. fut fondée partiellement en réponse au communisme et aux versions anti-religieuses.

L'après-guerre fut une période très active en ce qui a trait à la formation d'organisation nationale et internationale du travail.

#### LES SECRÉTARIATS INTERNATIONAUX AUJOURD'HUI

Durant la guerre, on établit, en 1941, le Comité du Syndicalisme Anglo-Soviet suivi de la fondation du Conseil du Syndicalisme international d'Urgence. Ce dernier décida qu'il serait la voix du travail international et formula un plan pour la reconstruction du mouvement syndical international après la guerre. Finalement, en septembre 1945, on note l'établissement de la Confédération mondiale des syndicats ouvriers (CMSO) qui amènera en 1945 les SIST à créer un comité consultatif qui négocierait collectivement avec la CMSO.

L'unité syndicale avec la participation russe était un mythe et bientôt il devint évident que la CMSO était contrôlée par les communistes. Vers 1948, les SIST refusèrent de se joindre à une CMSO divisée.

De 1948 à 1951, l'idée de s'associer à un autre corps international, amena les SIST à créer plusieurs comités de liaison ou autres dont la fonction était de coopérer, surtout avec la CMSO. Mais le refus constant des SIST à se joindre à la CMSO amena cette dernière à former les Internationales Syndicales qui étaient en concurrence directe avec les SIST.

Avec la formation en 1919 de l'Organisation internationale du travail, dont l'un des buts était l'établissement d'un code du travail international, il devint très important pour les SIST de se faire entendre et d'assurer une représentation constante. Avec la formation, après la guerre, de l'Unesco, on demanda une plus grande représentation et de plus complètes informations pour que la participation soit meilleure.

Géographiquement, l'établissement de bureaux à l'extérieur de l'Europe représente un développement important pour les SIST qui avaient eu, depuis des décades, de grandes difficultés à sortir du vieux continent.